

Project Report
Alaska Public Broadcasting, Inc.
Project Number No. 174-05
October 1, 2008 – December 31, 2008

Project Title & Summary

Four project work scopes are embodied in this grant award. The majority of the award is dedicated to two work scopes, the Capital Grant Program and radio digital conversion.

Public Broadcasting Facilities & Equipment Modernization Project

The purpose of the Public Broadcasting Facilities & Equipment Modernization Project is to provide much needed capital revenue for addressing system-wide infrastructure and technology priorities. In 2004, a system-wide infrastructure and technology needs assessment, ranging from basic tools to new facilities, approximated \$38 million. Total Denali Commission funding: \$6,127,000

Public Radio Conversion to Digital Transmission

Alaska's 28 public radio stations are changing their primary transmission equipment to the new standard for digital broadcasting. Funding the appropriate needs for all of the stations will cost approximately \$4 million. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) has already committed \$2.5 million toward this total and the Rasmuson Foundation has committed approximately \$700k toward the total. This critical funding will assure the project has the capacity to meet anticipated as well as some unanticipated needs. Total Denali Commission funding: \$800,000

Digital Distribution Network

Public Broadcasting data network interconnects all of Alaska's public radio and television stations by means of a digital intranet and the internet. This project was originally funded by the Denali Commission in FY04. \$1.9 million was set aside to build this modern telecommunications infrastructure. Additional funding is necessary for completion of this project. Total Denali Commission funding: \$100,000

Alaska Rural Communications Service (ARCS) & Satellite Interconnection Revitalization

Repair and replacement of existing broadcast infrastructure used to deliver public telecommunications services via radio and television to Alaskans all across the State. This project was originally funded by the Denali Commission in FY04. Additional funding is necessary for completion of this project. Total Denali Commission funding: \$100,000

Reporting Period: October 1, 2008 – December 31, 2008

Progress and activity during the fourth quarter of 2008 occurred within two work scope components: the facilities and equipment modernization project and the digital conversion project.

Facilities & Equipment Modernization Project – Capital Grant Program

Progress to date includes successful development and implementation of this capital grant program. APBI modeled the grant program after three well established programs which are familiar to public broadcasters in Alaska: the Rasmuson Foundation, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the Public Telecommunications & Facilities Program, U.S. Dept. of Commerce. We focused on the Rasmuson Foundation approach while incorporating some good ideas from the other two entities. We sought a high degree of integrity and accountability throughout development of the grant program.

Milestones reached since project inception:

2005

- Development of grant program concept and materials: overview, guidelines, priorities, procedures and panel review process, including development of application paperwork and administrative systems.
- Announcement of the Round I grant period occurred July 27, 2005. Applications were distributed electronically as well as via U.S. mail to all eligible entities. Deadline for the applications was September 30, 2005.
- A five person, independent grant panel met in Anchorage October 16-17, 2005 to review Round I proposals and make recommendations resulting in seventeen projects being awarded \$815,529 toward a total project cost of \$1,228,990. Collectively, the stations funded 34% of the total project cost.
- The panel process went smoothly and produced a legitimate independent review of the proposals per the grant program priorities and guidelines. It was evident that the panel had read all proposals and had come to the meeting ready to identify and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the proposals. Throughout the review, the APBI staff provided additional station and system information to the panel as requested.
- On October 26, 2005 the APBI board of directors approved the overall package of recommendations made by the panel and management. Round I award announcements were made October 31, 2005.

2006

- Announcement of the Round II grant period occurred March 10, 2006. Applications were distributed electronically as well as via U.S. mail to all eligible entities. Deadline for the applications was June 1, 2006.

- Round II received seventeen proposals requesting \$998,290 in financial assistance toward total project costs of \$1,170,232. Collectively, the stations funded approximately 15% of the total project cost. Five proposals were for facility improvements and twelve were for equipment.
- A five person, independent grant panel met in Anchorage June 29-30, 2006 to review proposals and make recommendations. The panel recommended that eight proposals be funded with no conditions attached and six be funded with conditions attached. Three proposals were not funded although the panel recommended that the applicants be given an opportunity to resubmit their proposals in order to address panel concerns. All three proposals were resubmitted and awarded grants.

2007

- An update of the system wide assessment was completed in August, 2007. Although many needs have been met since the original assessment in 2004, the system reports approximately \$36 million in unmet capital needs.
- Announcement of Round III of the grant program occurred August 17, 2007. Applications were distributed electronically to all eligible entities. Deadline for application was October, 19, 2007. Sixteen proposals were received by the deadline requesting \$916,371 toward a combined total project cost of \$1,179,703. Collectively, the stations funded approximately 17% of the total project costs. The proposals were reviewed by a grant panel on November 15-16, 2007.
- Round III grant award announcements were made in early December, 2007. The panel recommended that five proposals be funded with no conditions attached and eight be funded with conditions attached. Three proposals were not funded although the panel recommended that the applicants be given an opportunity to resubmit their proposals in order to address panel concerns. One of the three proposals has been resubmitted and was awarded a grant following additional panel review.

2008

- Round IV was announced October 1, 2008. Deadline for application was December 10, 2008. Fourteen proposals were received by the deadline requesting \$902,753 toward a combined total project cost of \$1,016,831. Collectively, the stations funded approximately 11% of the total project costs. Panel review took place January 22-23, 2009 and award announcements are anticipated in mid February 2009.

APBI continues to monitor grantee compliance for all projects through quarterly reporting requirements.

Public Radio Conversion to Digital Transmission

APBI continues to provide engineering advice, counsel and overall project management for the conversion to digital broadcasting in Alaska.

Milestones to date include:

- Installation and conversion of stations began in November 2005 in Southeast Alaska at KRBD Ketchikan the first non-commercial digital broadcaster in Alaska.
- **Conversion to digital radio continues to make progress. Twenty public radio stations in Alaska have fully converted to digital broadcast technology. Four stations are mostly converted with final installation activity pending. Two stations have begun installation work. Two stations continue work on design and work scope issues.**

Coordination of group bids on behalf of twenty three out of twenty six stations has been completed. Coordination of group equipment purchases has proven to be cost efficient, with most items coming in below the original estimates per station. Competitive bidding for group equipment purchase has yielded an average discount of 26% thus far resulting in savings of \$468,000.

- Group purchasing also results in standardizing core transmission technology throughout the statewide system. This in turn fosters more efficient and cost effective technical support within the system today and in the future.
- Technical training on new equipment has occurred for some key station technical staff including four engineers who had a full week of digital transmission equipment training at Harris Broadcasters in Quincy, Illinois. Technical support for station design and installation work of their digital transmission facilities is on-going with all stations.

Digital conversion activity detail October 1, 2008 – December 31, 2008:

1) KUCB-FM, Unalaska-Dutch Harbor

- a) **Background:** Unalaska Community Broadcasting was operating KIAL-AM, a facility inherited from the days of the Armed Forces Radio Network. It was operating under a Special Temporary Authority for several years from the FCC which required an upgrade in facilities. Originally a Construction Permit was obtained for a 4.6 Kw AM facility. But land issues for the tower and antenna could not be resolved. Therefore the station obtained a construction permit for an FM station.
- b) **Transmitter site:** The new site is on Haystack Hill using the same facility as the ARCS transmitter and Channel 8 television.
- c) **Digital radio installation:** We removed all the equipment from a former State of Alaska ARCS building. We discovered that the floor was rotten in several places. The floor was replaced by a local contractor. But the building is showing its age and should be replaced as soon as possible. The antenna and transmitter equipment was then installed and tested. The signal covers the community wonderfully, giving the largest fishing port in the United States good quality Public Radio service for the first time. The FM went on the air the day before the Fall fundraiser. They usually raised around six thousand dollars. They raised

nearly eighteen thousand dollars the first five days of the fundraiser. This shows how appreciative the community is of the new facility.

- d) **Digital Operation:** HD Radio transmission has not commenced as a piece of equipment failed after a day of testing. It has been returned to the factory and will be installed in February or early March, depending on the weather and the availability of hotel rooms during some fishing openings.

2) KSDP-AM, Sand Point

- a) Design continues for an Antenna Tuning Unit (ATU) to allow HD radio to be transmitted in Sand Point. The problem is that for an AM facility the tower is actually the antenna. The KSDP tower is short for the frequency of operation and sophisticated designs will be needed for proper operation. It is impossible to construct a taller antenna because of nearness to the airport. The consulting firm of Hatfield and Dawson, along with manufacturer Kintronic Laboratories is working on a solution.

3) KUAC-FM, Fairbanks:

- a) We have obtained a piece of test equipment which should help diagnose the problem with reflected power on the digital transmitting antenna. We will install this unit and conduct tests as soon as weather permits in Fairbanks.